

# How to Make Compost

## The Compost

Garden and domestic refuse can be used to make excellent compost. The container used is important, both to tidiness and to holding the heat, making the difference between a compost heap and a rubbish heap.

## Building the Heap

Choose a site in a sheltered place, which can be in a dry shade under a tree where nothing much will grow, but in this position the heap will need watering in dry weather. Level off the ground and flatten it with a spade. Cover the base of the compost heap with tough and stemmy rubbish, such as privet or other hedge clippings or tall tough weeds. This prevents finer materials from blocking the air channels. Then pile on the first 8 inch thick layer of weeds, lawn-mowings and garden waste, with kitchen waste in the middle.

Scatter enough dried blood, dried poultry manure or other available manure to cover the surface. Add another 8 inch layer of rubbish, whiten this with lime, pile on a third layer and then add manure or activator again. Repeat this sequence until the container is filled. This is rarely possible in a day as most heaps take weeks to build, adding more layers as they sink and decay until the heap is cold and the worms move in.

Other signs that the compost is ready are a faint earthy odour (the only smell), dark brown or black colour and a crumbly texture like well-rotted farmyard manure. Used like manure (though it is richer than potash) it can be dug in before sowing root crops without making them coarse and forked, and with lime, a bucketful a square yard is a fair dressing. Autumn heaps are ready to dig in by Spring and June heaps are mature ready for Autumn digging, so with enough material a container can be filled and emptied 3 times a year.

There are many propriety activators which do not need lime layers. Though layers of soil are often recommended where weeds have soil on the roots, it is unnecessary. Compost producing crops of weed seedlings can result when not enough soil off has been shaken off.

## What can go in the Compost Heap

Tea leaves, potato and vegetable peelings of all types, fruit peel and waste, egg shells, fish bones, rags (but not nylon or man-made fibres of any type), paper in small quantities (well scattered through the heap), vacuum cleaner dust, blanket fluff, hair combings etc.

Brussel sprout and cabbage stumps will rot if smashed with a hammer and weed roots, such as couch grass, docks, convolvulus and ground elder, can be spread on wire netting to dry out and then be composted. They will then enrich the compost. Seeding weeds and diseased materials are safe in the middle of the heap where it is hottest but do not use clubrooted cabbage or potato haulms.

## What to Leave Out

Metal of any kind including bottle tops, broken china, newspaper and cardboard in bulk, polythene and plastics. Tree prunings, pine needles, sawdust wood shavings thick branches and clippings will all decay in time

## Kitchen Wastes in Winter

If in winter there are too few weeds to cover the kitchen wastes, bury them in a heap or dig a pea trench a spade wide and a foot deep. Cover it with soil. When the trench is full, scatter Lime generously on the surface and leave to sink. Potato peelings should not go into pea trenches, odd eyes will grow and crowd the peas unless the winter is very cold.